

Scottish Overseas Missions: A Select Critical Bibliography

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There is no one book which is a sufficient introduction to this subject, but a number do seek to cover the field in general. Elizabeth Hewat's *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956* (1960) is an invaluable guide to the main story, covering all churches now united in the Church of Scotland, and giving the facts in concise form. But it is uncritical in outlook and never seeks to evaluate the story it unfolds, while it lists only the bare minimum of sources for each chapter. D. Mackichan's *The Missionary Ideal in the Scottish Churches* (1927) is very simplistic but does contain much useful information. R. W. Weir's *Foreign Missions of the Church of Scotland* (1900) covers the period before the Disruption and the work of the Old Kirk thereafter in easy style with a good deal of insight. Robert Hunter's *History of the Missions of the Free Church of Scotland in India and Africa* (1873) belongs to a more partisan age and shows it. Despite its title it begins in the 1790s and is full of names and dates, but its lack of interpretation makes it more a chronology than a history. Finally, John McKerrow's *History of the Foreign Missions of the Secession and United Presbyterian Church* (1867) is a string of excerpts from missionary letters and magazine articles, some of them extremely useful, from Jamaica, Africa, India, China, and even "the moral wastes of Canada".

For any study of nineteenth-century missions some understanding of the eighteenth-century intellectual background is essential, and Frank E. Manuel's *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (1959) is the obvious book for this purpose. To observe these ideas applied to missions by Scots, there is no substitute for the annual sermons delivered to the S.S.P.C.K. throughout the eighteenth-century, though few libraries have more than a random sample. *A Brief Survey of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (1957) by I. Graham Andrew is useful for understanding that Society, and there is also Henry Hunter's lively *A Short History . . .* (1795). But there is one book, Claudius Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia* (1812), which mixes these early ideas with others and incidentally gives to popular English the word "juggernaut", from a day when the juggernaut only exacted its human sacrifices at stated times of year.

There are innumerable biographies with bombastic titles such as *McGonigall of Asia* or *Smith of Africa*. Some obscure the greatness of their subjects, while others fail to obscure a lack of greatness. Yet some stand out. Could anything seem less

promising than Iza Christie's *Dugald Christie of Manchuria, Pioneer and Medical Missionary, by his Wife* (1932)? But his wife wrote well, in this book and elsewhere, and here we have the story of a church developing from nothing and then being wrecked by wars and banditry as the old China collapses and the new is not yet born. The medical work was constant, but the work of evangelisation was thwarted save for one decade in which conditions were such that a church could arise. Readers who want the Manchurian story brought up to date may turn to Austin Fulton's *Through Earthquake, Wind and Fire: Church and Mission in Manchuria 1867-1950* (1967), though its pedestrian style and lack of organisation may blind the reader to its overall intelligence. Another notable work is William Gunn's *The Gospel in Futuna* (1914) which details the growth of Christianity in one small island of the New Hebrides. Gunn lacked the literary talent of Iza Christie, but his story moves along for all that, and if we find him actually destroying the shrines of traditional religion we note that he only does so when the local Christians demand it, and on one occasion non-Christians lend a hand. Also on the New Hebrides, John Inglis' *Thesis: The Doctrine of Missions, with special reference to the South Sea Islands* (1881) is a fascinating if scatty and inaccurate little broadside, while John G. Paton's *Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography* (1889) was a classic in its day. There is much that is noteworthy in it, but the narrative moves too slowly for modern readers and one would have thought even the Victorians might have found it too repetitious, and it is probable that Paton's brother did him a disservice by adding material wherever he felt that the lily needed gilding. His wife, Maggie Whitecross Paton, has left us *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides* (1896) which is a string of gushing letters about life among the natives, though even this initially irritating woman grows on us as the islanders grow on her.

Turning to India, M. A. Laird's *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837* (1972) should not be overlooked. Laird is the only modern scholar to contrast Scottish and English ideals of education as a prerequisite or consequence respectively of the evangelistic process, and he puts Duff in his necessary perspective. George Smith in his *Life of Alexander Duff, D.D. LL.D.* (1879) gives the facts but fails to interpret their meaning, though even through the eyes of Smith it is possible to discern Duff shifting his position in response to intellectual change elsewhere. William Paton's *Alexander Duff, Pioneer of Missionary Education* (1923) presents an urbane picture and still manages to believe that "Duff turned Calcutta upside down" with his teaching. As for Duff's own *India and India Missions* (1839), it is a puzzling affair. The first and longest part is a wordy collection of everything Duff had ever heard or read about Hinduism,

rearranged in European categories so that it may be dismissed in terms with which the reader is familiar. The dominant idea seems to be to prove that it is pre-Reformation justification by works, against which Duff thunders as a new Luther. If Duff is naïve and bumptious on Hinduism, he does show an occasional flash of reluctant admiration, but it is a relief when he turns to his plans for evangelising India. Here he is more constructive, but he proposes for India essentially the same aims that Chalmers had for Glasgow. Christianity will solve all problems and any mere temporal solution for anything is absolutely useless and must be resisted as Chalmers resisted government intervention to ameliorate Scottish poverty. Once he gives an account of his own work in Calcutta, Duff is far more interesting and more credible, and the final impression is that of a man not really at home in matters intellectual but ideally suited for practical work.

One may still admire Duff, but in fairness one should also draw attention to at least one missionary who was both intolerant and intolerable and the person of John Wilson meets this requirement admirably. George Smith's *Life of John Wilson, D.D., F.R.S.* (1879) would have it that Wilson turned Bombay upside down and is less credible than the same author's life of Duff, but the "terrible earnestness" of his subject may have been too much even for him. John Wilson's *The Evangelization of India* (1849) is a collection of addresses and articles in which he looks down on India and is not pleased. A third book by George Smith is *Stephen Hislop: Pioneer Missionary & Naturalist in Central India from 1844 to 1863* (1888) which achieves the not inconsiderable feat of being narrower than the other two books already mentioned, though the narrowness is impartially directed at Hindus and non-Evangelical Christians. There is a fair amount of information about Nagpur, but Hislop does not really emerge as any sort of figure at all, even when he describes Hinduism as "a monstrous compound of error, impurity, and tyranny". John F. W. Youngson's *Forty Years of the Panjab Mission of the Church of Scotland 1855-1895* (1896) is a baddish book by a sympathetic missionary, valuable mainly for its attempts to come to terms with other religions. John Murdoch's *Indian Missionary Manual (Revised)* (1870) is a vast compendium on how to be a missionary, choose a proper wife, and maintain proper health. "Before a married European missionary will have thoroughly mastered the language, the Society which sent him out will have incurred an outlay of about £1,000. He is therefore a valuable article, worthy of some care." Donald MacMillan's *The Life of Professor Hastie* (1926) shows that the most unsuitable persons could be caught up in the missionary enterprise, and the reader can only view Hastie with astonishment, even if he may have been right about the great Calcutta scandals. Finally, J. M. D.

Meiklejohn's *An Old Educational Reformer: Dr Andrew Bell* (1881) is a work of such comic genius that it should not be omitted, even if the protagonist of the Madras system was not exactly a missionary.

Moving to Africa, James Stewart's *Dawn in the Dark Continent* (1903) is rather wordy and paternalistic, but something of the man shines through, and his book is a good introduction to the ideas of that period. James Wells' *Stewart of Lovedale* (1909) is an unsatisfactory and at times a racist book, skipping over most of what matters but throwing odd lights on dark corners as if by inadvertence. K. J. King's *Pan-Africanism and Education* (1971) is a scholarly analysis of twentieth-century educational policies in Africa, particularly East Africa, with enough missionary and Scottish content to make it worthy of note. R. McPherson's *Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (1970) is far better in every way than most such books and there is still no competitor in this field. Norman Maclean's *Africa in Transformation* (1913), that prolific author's first book, is unusual in having been published three times — the first two attempts led to withdrawal in the face of libel actions. The reader even of this emasculated remnant will understand why. J. A. Chalmers' *Tiyo Soga* (1878) is the story of an African minister, with a Scottish wife, working in South Africa before the rise of modern racism, though they encountered some taunts. John Philip's *Researches in South Africa* (1828) was intended to rouse passions and still succeeds in doing so. Perhaps it always will.

With regard to Central Africa, John McCracken's *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940* (1977) is an excellent guide and particularly welcome for the way in which popular preconceptions fall before the author's common sense. For the reader with time for only one book, this is probably the one to choose. Mention may also be made of two of those writers who try to popularise missionary work by associating it with some current craze, a dangerous activity not unknown to-day. The first is J. N. Ogilvie, author of *Our Empire's Debt to Missions* (1924). Ogilvie was more imperial than a missionary would have been, and in some of his views he was surprisingly eighteenth-century, but he gets in so many jabs at white settlers that the reader may well conclude that with friends like Ogilvie the empire had not need of enemies. Henry Drummond's *Tropical Africa* (1888) links missionary work to evolution in a style so dazzling that the reader's critical faculties are held in abeyance, at least for a while. Dan Crawford, a Brethren missionary from Arran who worked in the Eastern Congo, is best known for *Thinking Black* (1912), a scarifying and untidy work in which folklore about race is conveyed in a confidential tone, thus widening the gap between black and white, contrary to the author's apparent intention. And it is now time to

introduce that phenomenon of missionary propaganda, W. P. Livingstone, who wrote a string of missionary biographies with all the essential facts, though it is only by reading between the lines that we can make them mean anything. The reader will be puzzled to determine whether W. P. Livingstone gave us these clues in ignorance of their significance, or whether he knew the deeper story but hesitated to state it plainly in front of the children. His *Laws of Livingstonia* (1921) has a great deal of detail but does not do much with it. Laws' own *Reminiscences of Livingstonia* (1934) is a placid account by one of the great missionaries stating his aims clearly and sensibly and always regarding Africans as responsible people. This is probably the most suitable single book, despite its matter of fact style, depicting Scottish missionary ideals worked out at their best. W. P. Livingstone's *A Prince of Missionaries* (1931) is not a very good description of Alexander Hetherwick, but in its later sections it does give a credible picture of the conflict between missionary paternalism and governmental exploitation. Hetherwick's own *The Romance of Blantyre* (1931) is a bland product based on lectures, with a surprisingly jingoistic undercurrent. While in this area some mention should be made of Donald Fraser who may be represented by *The Future of Africa* (1911). This is disappointingly dull for a study book, and is couched in the all too regrettable racial language of its day.

But W. P. Livingstone scored his greatest success with *Mary Slessor of Calabar* (1916) in whom the discerning reader may find all the conflicting ideals of post-Moody evangelicalism struggling with the traditions of the United Presbyterian Church. He also wrote *The White Queen of Okoyong: Mary Slessor* (1916) for children. It is awful cloying stuff, with demeaning racial stereotypes happily less obvious in this writer's adult works, if we except his early *Black Jamaica* (1899). But if we turn to the books of those on the spot, we find that the U.P. mission in Jamaica and Calabar was a great literary machine. George Blyth's *Reminiscences of Missionary Life* (1851) tells of work in the Scottish Missionary Society's field in southern Russia, then in Jamaica in the days of slavery, which he hated "with a ten-fold degree of intensity". He is maddeningly sane whatever happens, and comes through as a wise though simple man, living through several generations of missionary principles. Hugh Goldie's *Calabar and its Mission* (1901), in a second edition with chapters by J. T. Dean, is notable for its praise of King Eyo Honesty who saw the benefits of the mission for his people, for its denunciation of superstition which "robs life of its enjoyment", and for Goldie's discretion in never mentioning Mary Slessor, though Dean gives her guarded mention in his section. Alex Robb's *The Gospel to the Africans* (1861) concerns William Jameson of

Jamaica and Calabar, and is not very spritely but does tell us something of the indigenous Baptists who proceeded the white missionaries in Jamaica. W. Marwick's *William and Louisa Anderson* (1897) adds a certain amount on both Jamaica and Calabar, but is most noteworthy for William's lyrical account of his youth in Midlothian, and for the editor's care not to intrude upon the casual reader the fact that William and Louisa married across racial lines. Lastly, there is Hope M. Waddell's *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa* (1863), the Central Africa in question being Old Calabar. Waddell is a delightful chronicler, sympathetic and sensible, and selections from this very long book might well be re-published today, though it must be admitted that a few of his best pieces have been lifted without acknowledgment from other books noted above. The Jamaican section is more enthralling than that on Calabar, and this seems to be true of all books which deal with both places.

There are literally hundreds of books about David Livingstone, who was surprisingly fortunate in his biographers. W. G. Blaikie's *Personal Life of David Livingstone* (1880) is still the basic text for understanding the man and his work, though Blaikie is discreet to the point of letting most readers suppose that his hero was a member of either the Church of Scotland or the Free Church. Frank Debenham's *The Way to Ilala* (1955) only covers the last journey, but it is probably the best book for anyone who wishes to share the mind and the heart of Livingstone, and it is the most readable. R. J. Campbell's *Livingstone* (1929) was once popular but is so no longer, and in fact it has little to offer. Tim Jeal's *Livingstone* (1973) makes claims to get behind earlier accounts and give the true story, but if he does no worse than others he does no better and there are no startling disclosures in this book. Jeal seems ill at ease in the thought-world of the early nineteenth-century, but his book improves as it goes on and is generally fair and intelligent. Oliver Ransford's *Livingstone's Lake* (1966) is not always reliable but he catches the spirit of the story and of the man so that this volume is more helpful than has usually been acknowledged. Unhappily the same cannot be said for the same author's *David Livingstone: The Dark Interior* (1978) which is best known for the argument that the great man suffered from cyclic depression. Even if this theory is accepted, and many will have reached similar conclusions without having read this book, it does not explain all that much about Livingstone, and Ransford is naïve about Livingstone's religious life and writes about Africans in the spirit of the white Rhodesia from which this book came. Judith Listowel's *The Other Livingstone* (1974) is a mixed-up story which suffers from credulity and lack of background, but still manages to make a few good points. I. Schapera's

Livingstone's Private Journals 1851-1853 (1960) is invaluable for understanding the man and his world, and is also enthralling in itself. In Livingstone's published works there was less immediacy and less interest than in his journals, but they are still works of literary merit. These are *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) in which he still has his youthful confidence, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries* (1865) in which he tries to explain away the failures of the expedition and of its leader and does not succeed, and *The Last Journals of David Livingstone* (1874), edited by Horace Waller, in which we see Livingstone coming to terms with himself, with Africa, and perhaps with God.

Perhaps something should be said of missions to the Jews outwith Scotland, and here the obvious book is David Brown's *Life of the late John Duncan, LL.D.* (1872). This is a wordy but useful book only partly about "Rabbi" Duncan, a man of so many words and tongues that it was said he could talk his way to the Great Wall of China, though apparently not through it. He was learned indeed, but there is no evidence that he could make himself understood in any modern tongue except English, and when he became a professor some of his students expressed doubts about that.

If the books listed above speak of different continents and different generations, they all speak with the voice of the missionary, and it is a fitting corrective to read Paul Mushindo's *Life of a Zambian Evangelist* (1973) to see how Scottish missionaries appeared to those amongst whom they worked. Perhaps Mushindo was unfortunate in the particular missionary under whom he laboured, but he is such a devout and forgiving Christian that his witness is particularly valuable for those who believe that Scots were somehow immune from the cruder forms of racism.

A word should be added about periodical literature. Early Scottish work and interest is found in *The Evangelical Magazine* published in London from 1793, and in *The Missionary Magazine* published in Edinburgh from 1796, but both these organs turned to other matters when overseas missions lost their first popularity after about 1800. *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland* began publication in 1838, divided in two at the Disruption, and went through various changes thereafter. That of the established Church of Scotland was absorbed into the same church's *Life and Work* after 1900, carrying some missionary material with it, while that of the Free Church merged with the *Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church* in the same year. The resultant *Missionary Record of the United Free Church* was assumed into *Life and Work* after the union of 1929. Apart from these journals, there were a number of

unofficial publications, usually dealing with some particular mission field, though the *Missionary Register* of the Scottish Missionary Society also covered general matters from its beginnings in 1820 until the formation of the United Presbyterian Church. All these journals had the same failing; they could not see the wood for the trees. But this failing has its advantages for the modern student of missions, who finds himself or herself amongst a mass of material in which trees and even twigs may be closely examined without much editorial intervention. In the periodicals are reports of obscure persons and obscurer ideas unknown to formal history. This is the world of popular history, and it throws some light on the more cautious matter which was treated in books.

In concluding this bibliography some comments may be permitted. If certain books have been omitted this may be because the bibliographer read them but thought them unworthy of mention, or heard of them but thought them unworthy of reading, or did not hear of them at all. If certain areas are not mentioned, that may be because no books about them have come to light, or the books that did come to light were themselves without light. And if the bibliographer may presume to advise the reader, it is to begin by reading modern works where these exist. Only thus will it be possible to identify key features of any missionary exercise and gain some sort of perspective. And if there is one thing which emerges from wide reading in this field, it is that missionaries and missions are most naturally classified, not according to their denomination or social class or area, but according to their date. The missionary enterprise from Scotland existed over nearly two centuries, and the reader who has not in mind at least four or five rough periods of changing theologies and conditions will never grasp the issues. If there is another thing which emerges, it is that missionaries made their decisions from a mixture of preconceptions derived from the homeland at the time that they left it, and from observations made in the missionary territory. Thus, for example, in the period of extreme racism from about 1880 to 1910, missionaries were obliged to moderate any racism brought from home with practical considerations based on what they actually saw or were required to do, though their books might show both sources of ideas side by side. Missionary propagandists at home had no need to consider the problems of the field. They set forth the home ideas with little modification, in fact they were obliged to do this to a certain extent if they were to gain a hearing, and it is important for the modern reader to bear in mind that such books are not a true report of what was thought in the field. Finally, if there is much dross there is still much gold, and if some of the heroes had feet of clay there are still many who merit our attention, while the

issues treated in this literature have increased in significance with the passing of the years. These books, in short, deserve to be read more than they are, and more than they are likely to be in the days ahead.

